



INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FIRE FIGHTERS

**NEWS from Fire Fighters**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: February 7, 2005**

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**BUSH FY 2006 BUDGET PROPOSAL CUTS FIRE ACT BY 30%**

**Budget Provides Zero in Funding to Address Massive Staffing & Preparedness Problems Plaguing More Than Two-Thirds of America's Communities**

WASHINGTON, DC – The General President of the International Association of Fire Fighters, AFL-CIO/CLC, Harold Schaitberger, issued this statement today on President Bush's Fiscal Year 2006 budget proposal, which was released this morning:

“It was disappointing to see that the FY '06 budget proposal that the president sent to Congress contained a 30 percent cut -- \$215 million -- in funding to the FIRE Act, the federal program that provides equipment, training and staffing to local fire departments. These reductions represent a continuing pattern in which President Bush has either not included any funding for the FIRE Act or substantially reduced funding below what Congress appropriated the prior year.

“Both Republicans and Democrats have championed providing sufficient resources to the FIRE Act and SAFER, the program that provides funding to add fire fighters to local departments, since the programs were authorized. Our hope is that we can work with members on both sides of the aisle in Congress to once again bring the funding for emergency preparedness in our nation's communities back to levels that begin to address the major shortages we see in more than two-thirds of the communities in America.

“We also hope to establish a productive dialogue with new Department of Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff and the White House to get these problems corrected and to ensure that the funds that are ultimately appropriated get distributed quickly and efficiently.

“Our nation’s fire fighters need swift action by Congress and DHS so that they can begin using the resources that are available to protect the citizens.”

The Boston Globe’s Special Report on the decline in the nation’s fire response can be viewed at [www.boston.com/news/specials/fires/](http://www.boston.com/news/specials/fires/). The United States Fire Administration, National Fire Protection Association, and the Council on Foreign Relations found in studies reported in 2003 that our nation’s emergency response capabilities are critically under funded, and our first responders are understaffed, under trained and ill-equipped.

*The IAFF, headquartered in Washington, DC, represents more than 267,000 professional fire fighters and paramedics who protect 80 percent of the nation’s population. More than 2,900 affiliates protect nearly 6,000 communities in Canada and in every state in the U.S. The IAFF has experience 35 consecutive years of membership growth. The IAFF’s Political Action Committee, FIREPAC, is currently one of the Top 25 PAC’s in the nation. Visit us at [www.iaff.org](http://www.iaff.org) .*